Change a Light for Cleaner Air

Did you know that if every household in the United States replaced its next bulb or fixture with an ENERGY STAR model, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, more than $600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs, commonly called CFLs, are ENERGY STAR rated light bulbs that are making lots of headlines these days. These bulbs, often recognized by a "swirly" shape, come in many different shapes, sizes, brightness levels, and hues of light – from bright white, to daylight, to the cool blue most often associated with fluorescent light.

CFLs reduce energy use because unlike the old-fashioned incandescent bulbs, they do not waste a lot of electricity generating heat. CFLs are often cool to the touch after operating for long periods of time – or at least, are less hot than an incandescent would be!

What allows compact fluorescents to be so efficient? Well, currently, a tiny amount of mercury – about as much as could fit on the head of a pin – is the piece of the puzzle that helps CFLs use about 1/3 less energy than a standard incandescent bulb. While CFL manufacturers are working to completely eliminate mercury from the bulb's design, the technology isn't quite there yet.

CFL disposal is also an issue of concern. Home Depot recently announced that they will be accepting CFL bulbs for recycling in the near future. Meanwhile, for more information about disposal or how to properly clean up a broken CFL in your home, visit the Division for Air Quality Web site at www.air.ky.gov.

If every household replaced its five most used lights, or the bulbs in them, with ones that have earned the ENERGY STAR, together we would prevent more than one trillion pounds of greenhouse gases.

KENTUCKY DIVISION FOR AIR QUALITY